

SOFT SKILLS- THE KEY SKILLS FOR DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE PERSONALITY TO CONQUER IN THE PROFESSIONAL WORLD

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ABSTRACT

Soft Skills also known as life skills or people skills are the behavioral competencies which an individual needs to excel to ensure success in the highly advancing professional world and also equip the person to fit aptly into a social structure. They ensure easy adaptability of a person in the social /professional life. They play a vital role in the professional success of the aspirant and also help to boost the professional life and their importance cannot be denied in this era of globalization and the age of information and knowledge. Inculcating good soft skills enables an individual to compete with the milieu of job seekers with mediocre skills and emerge successful. They also enable an individual to do well in the personal life as well. These are the right combination of psychological, social and interpersonal skills and develop the ability of an individual to develop an adaptive and a positive behavior which enables him to face the challenges of everyday life. Soft Skills include all the skills required to develop an effective personality. These skills are beyond communication skills and include a cluster of abilities and traits related to behavior, attitude and personality, like interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, presentation skills, team building and leadership skills, time management, motivational skills, listening, writing skills and all the other nuances of communication skills including body language etc. critical thinking and problem solving skills, etc. Soft Skills are different from hard skills as the latter are specific to the activity concerned whereas the former are useful in all areas personal as well as professional. They help in building the self esteem and confidence are thus, the key to personal as well as professional advancement. The knowledge of these skills enables an individual to handle people as well as difficult situations with ease. Landing into a dream job requires the right combination of hard skills/technical skills and soft skills.

Soft Skills help you become a successful professional. These skills help in fine tuning your personality. These are the skills that make leaders stand out from the pack. (1)

KEYWORDS: Soft Skills, Life Skills or People Skills, Social /Professional Life, Mediocre Skills

INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the different soft skills necessary for professional success and how they can contribute to building a personality which is impressive and has a lasting impact. Soft skills training at an elementary level lays a solid foundation at the elementary level and students who are provided such training easily adapt to the professional environment:

An investment in soft skills ultimately affects the bottom line by building new knowledge in the student. Relationships play a vital role in human life. In today's fast paced and continually changing technology, hard skills are continuously in need of being updated. A student who has interpersonal problem and another who has difficulty in making

a choice about his career suffers from a lack of soft skills. Hence, the need is for a continuous renewal of soft skills in terms of teaching and training the students. This will facilitate their potential towards being effective and successful. (2)

Soft Skills and Personality Development

Learning Soft Skills is a continuous process they can be developed through constant practice and appropriate training. The learning of soft skills pertains to enhancing the personality to suit the needs of the new life which is an upcoming challenge in the modern era of globalization. Academic success is not enough to meet the challenges of this age, thus success today depends upon personality development in the appropriate manner. Behaviour mirrors the personality and has a great importance in our conduct in the society. Success is imminent for an individual with all the important traits of a good and well balanced personality.

Personality is defined as the organization of the psychosocial systems in an individual that moulds his thoughts and actions. Personality is the sum total of the physical, mental, emotional and social characteristics of an individual. (3)

To enhance the personality firstly the various aspects of the personality need to be identified and polished to develop a pleasing personality. Different personality types comprise of sensitive, aggressive, dynamic, pleasing, jovial etc. There is a need to guide each type in the right manner and get the best results. It is the duty of parents, elders, teachers and trainers to guide the learners to channelize their potentials during the course of personality formation. For e.g. Self esteem which is an component and refers to self respect of an individual, can be developed by cultivating a positive attitude right from the childhood. This would help in overcoming complexes and developing a balanced personality which is emotionally strong and promotes an all inclusive growth. Thus a person needs a perfect blend of hard skills and soft skills to develop an effective personality.

The importance of personality increases as social life becomes more complex. A ‘pleasing personality’ has a ‘marketable value’ in a complex society and is highly prized and sought after. (4)

Soft Skills Required to develop the Personality

Communicative Competence

The technology Driven rapidly advancing world today gives rise to the need to master the language skills and imbibe excellent communication skills which are necessary to achieve success in the academic and professional arena. Effective communication is the corner stone of soft skills. The success of any venture hinges on the ability to communicate aptly to convey the complete and correct information in this fast paced world. Companies hire professionals with good command over communication especially English communication in the Indian context as the operations involve communicating with national and international clients. Different forms of communication including discussions, presentations, face to face meetings, interviews, etc. and the written forms including letters, emails, reports, memos, circulars etc. need to be framed properly to ensure a smooth flow of activities in an organization leading to success. Several companies provide training to the employees in soft skills with special emphasis on communication skills to improve the capabilities of the learners. For any talented professional it is necessary to listen, speak read and write well. During verbal communication one should be able to communicate effectively with the right combination of words and body language to leave a profound impact on the listener. The core of an individual’s personality is the self concept one forms and it has a great impact on the behavior. Self esteem is dependent on the self concept and people with a positive self esteem

communicate more openly and effectively. Active listening is another very important aspect of effective communication. Even more than the words one speaks, the body language communicate the qualities one needs for a successful career. Adopting the appropriate gestures while conversing including, nodding, smiling, showing your attention through appropriate body language and asking questions to the speaker indicates that the listener is giving complete attention to the speaker. Thus, all the areas like usage of words, speed of delivery of words, pitch modulation, body language, listening and writing techniques, etc. that combine together to make communication impressive should be considered during a soft skills training program.

Communication competence is the ability to express views in an effective manner, enabling one to achieve goals and enhance relationships. (5)

Interpersonal Skills

Developing good interpersonal skills is another important aspect that ensures success in professional life. To build good relation one should be confident, be able to rightly analyze the situations and take appropriate decisions. Ice Breaker activities and various games conducted during a soft skills training program help in improving the confidence of an individual and also enable the learners to shed their inhibitions and interact with people to develop good relations.

Exchanging polite greetings and following the right etiquettes at different places during interaction also helps in developing healthy relationships. Man is a social animal and cannot live in isolation therefore cultivating the correct attitude and conversing and interacting to strengthen the relations with the people around leads one towards a successful career. An individual should cultivate the ability to respect the views and sentiments of others and should also learn the art of empathy to establish good relationships. One should also have the ability to politely deal with the situation in case of difference of views with others without hurting anyone. Interpersonal relationship skills help to relate in a positive manner with our colleagues, family and friends.

Another important concept that is a part of these skills is team building and leadership skills. Teamwork involves:

- Sharing information
- Listening and responding
- Providing Support to the team
- Respecting the opinions and interests of team members and recognizing the achievements

Thus, teamwork involves a set of interactions to be dealt with positively and overcoming the conflicts like ego clashes, disagreements, politics etc. with efficiency and finally accomplish the goal. Good team work is the backbone of any organization and these skills form a very important component of the soft skills training. The binder and motivator of the team emerge as the leader and thus act as a bridge between the team and the management. Team building skills are imperative at all the levels in an organization and the recruiters test them through interview and discussions during the recruitment process. A socially inept person is never recruited, open ended questions are raised during interviews to test the interpersonal skills.

Intrapersonal Skills

These skills reside deep within an individual and they become completely a part of an individual who is not even

aware of their presence and the impact they have on one's personality but they play a significant role in personal and professional life. As all the soft skills are inter linked it is difficult to classify them under a particular head, they have to be mentioned at relevant places for explanation. Similarly the skills like self esteem and self confidence mentioned before are major intrapersonal skills along with managing negative emotions and learning assertiveness. These skills are a reflection of the self awareness of an individual which is an integral part of a positive personality. Good communication skills are also an outcome of the mastery in intrapersonal skills. Thus to develop effective interpersonal skills it is necessary to establish good intrapersonal skills. Becoming self aware is the first step towards improving interpersonal effectiveness. Self esteem is another important element of the personality as it is an overall evaluation of one's worth and self confidence is the trust that one has in his abilities. Both need to be developed to face the challenges of the transforming world. A high self esteem helps in building a positive attitude in life and confidence helps one to build a realistic view of oneself and their situations.

As a being of power, intelligence and love and the lord of his own thoughts, man holds the key to every situation, and contains within himself that transforming and regenerative agency by which he may make himself what he wills" (6)

Assertiveness is another trait of a well balanced personality and is a way of life, it is the ability to express yourself and also state your rights without violating the rights of other individuals. Assertiveness is also an important part of communication as it leaves a direct impression on the listener. Another area that holds importance is managing disagreements, conflicts and emotional disturbances which are dealt with while training in these skills is conducted and leads to a well adjusted individual. Thus, these skills require adequate attention in the personality enhancement sessions as they lead to easy adaptability in the corporate world and also maintain healthy relations.

Group Discussions and Presentation Skills

To ensure success in any organization or a group it is necessary for an individual to excel in the art of presentations and discussions. Group discussions these days play a pivotal role in the selection procedure in both private and government organizations as they act as a tool to study the attitudinal and behavioral responses of the individual considered. GD demands good conversational skills, team work skills, flexibility, motivational skills, listening skills, leadership skills etc. as it measures a number of personality traits in a single activity. Thus, group discussion techniques form an important part of soft skills as it involves varied aspects of the personality. Presentations hold the power to convey the ideas, views and opinions of the presenters effectively and efficiently so as to lay the right impression on the listeners and accomplish the task. Giving an effective presentation involves analyzing the topic, knowing the audience, studying the scenario where the presentation is to be delivered and checking the compatibility and suitability of the audio-visual aids required.

Business Etiquettes, Manners and Corporate Grooming

The professional and personal life requires appropriate manners and etiquettes in an individual while he presents himself before others. A business organization has a particular culture and the employees need to adapt to that culture. They also look for certain criteria regarding this aspect while employing the candidate. Individual's appearance and the manner in which one behaves both play an important role in forming impressions. The appearance also comprises of two components, the manner in which one grooms oneself and the way one dresses. The professional scenario expects a particular standard to be followed in this regard. How an individual feels about the self is evident in the grooming,

etiquettes and manner adopted and thus they play an important role in projecting the personality. The basic knowledge and the practice of etiquettes and manners is a valuable advantage as being courteous and thoughtful towards other leaves a lasting impression. Thus, soft skills also provide training in this regard to develop this aspect of the personality and present a positive image in the highly competitive professional world.

Interview Skills

An interview is a process in which the employer evaluates a potential employee from the psychological and sociological perspective for prospective employment in an organization. Although the nature of interviews differ in different organizations but the basic rules remain the same. Apart from technical skills a great emphasis is laid on the soft skills possessed by an individual. The first reflection of these soft skills is found in the resume. An individual can mention soft skills using terminology like, team player, confident, flexible, problem solver, etc. But one should not write anything without thinking as the skills mentioned have to be explained later on at the time of the interview. Therefore always do a thorough self evaluation before mentioning the soft skills in the resume. Interviewers ask open ended questions to evaluate the soft skills of an individual.

These technical interviews focus not only on the problem solving ability but also a veracity of the resume. Typically, these interviews go deeper and deeper into what you have accomplished, both academically and in your previous jobs. As you go through to later rounds, there will be more of a 'HR flavor' to the interview when they test your soft skills and abilities like team work and communication. (7)

The interviewer evaluates an individual on various soft skills which should be kept in mind, these include, confidence level, mental agility, communication skills, adaptability, interpersonal skills, management, leadership skills etc. Thus, a comprehensive knowledge of these skills and their applicability in the interview forms an integral part of a soft skills training. Being adept in these skills ensures one's success in an interview and achieving the required job.

There are various other skills like problem solving, critical thinking and decision making apart from team work, time management, stress management etc. which are very important in a professional scenario. The list is never ending. There is a need to identify the area one requires to improve upon and get trained to develop a rainbow personality identified everywhere.

CONCLUSIONS

Hence the study reveals that soft skills can be varied, but the right training with a well designed curriculum and ample practical exposure equips an individual to face the challenges in the professional environment. The organization always employs the best and the brightest and tends to nurture their creativity and skills throughout their careers constantly motivating them to achieve higher levels of personal excellence. Even when one is in an organization soft skills training programs are organized to open new mental avenues for attaining a new perspectives and mental satisfaction in the stressful work environment. The individuals who grab these opportunities enjoy a glorious career and are well adjusted in their personal life as well. The key to success lies in educating our young students and professionals in the virtues of soft skills which will surely give them success. The boundaries of soft skills have spread beyond the campus of organizations and found its way to college campuses and the **Infosys Campus Connect Program** is a testimony to this fact. The colleges have adapted this program and are successfully training the young intellectual capital to be industry ready recruits who would bloom in their chosen profession. Thus, these life skills have become a necessity to adapt to the social environment

of this competitive world and the stage has been set, there is a need to grab the opportunity and lead our way towards sure success.

These are timeless skills and knowledge necessary for success in any age and involve lifelong learning.

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